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The voice of the Darjeeling Hills

Himalayan Times

In Support of GORKHALAND

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OF
MOBILES**

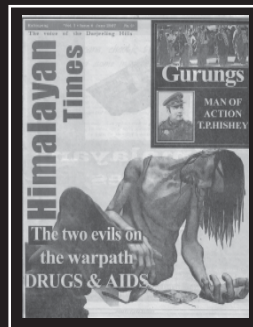
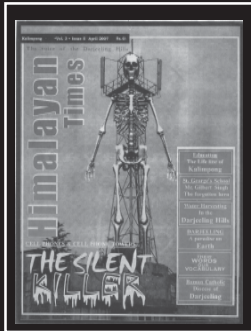
**JELEPLA
TRADE
DRAMA AT
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**AN
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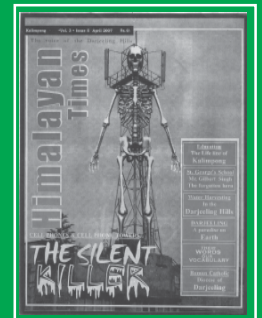
The voice of the Darjeeling Hills

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We are indeed marooned in our own land. We are indeed an "Orphan Nation" ...orphaned not in a foreign land, but in our own motherland which we call home.

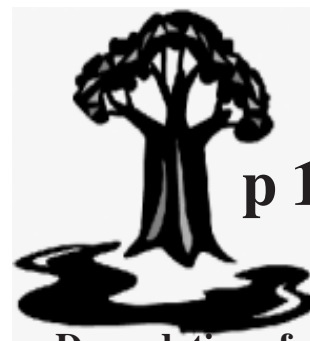
HISTORY OF THE DARJEELING AREA - A JUGGLING ACT p 10



History is now the preferred topic of discussion everywhere- whether to be on television talk shows, morning walks or in the *Chia ko Dokans*.



BEWARE OF MOBILE'S p 15



Degradation of
Environment, pollution
and Ecological Problem
in Darjeeling Hill Areas.



Traders at Jeleppla during the 1930's

DRAMA AT 14,500 FEET

What is happening at Nathula in the name of trade is actually a sham but our netas want the same at Jeleppla too



Readers who follow my writings probably will straight away skip this article of mine the moment they realize that this piece of writing is once again on the subject of Jeleppla. I have written on this topic so many times, here in Himalayan Times, in almost all English newspapers or journals that publish from the North Bengal region as well as in blog sites and web sites, that those of you who keep track of what I write, will probably say- oh no not once again!! Well, people may get tired reading about it about I feel so strongly about this subject that I will never tire writing about it.

And the subject of this article is that I feel that resumption of trade through the Jeleppla Pass via Kalimpong is the worst idea considering the present scenario, rather the opening of Jeleppla for the purpose of tourism would be God-sent for this region.

Yes I really feel that Politicians, Writers and leaders of the Chambers Of

Commerce who have been advocating the resumption of trade through the Jeleppla Pass, either have not made enough research and so are ignorant on the subject or are choosing to ignore the facts for whatever reasons or are just paying lip-service to this demand. Ignorance, probably is the reason why they keep harping on this matter. I for one, feel that resumption of trade through Jeleppla via Kalimpong is really a bad idea and in any case

under the prevailing circumstances, will never be allowed both by the Indian government and its Chinese counterpart. And considering the big eye-wash that the present Nathula Trade is- who would want another similar farce to unfold just another twenty kilometers away from the drama taking place at Nathula?? Yes ask anyone who knows or go to the Internet and you can see for yourself that the much-hyped trade between India and China at Nathula is nothing but a sham!!!

Since the Pass opened up for trade once again in the year 2006, after many many postponements, the volume of business conducted is probably even lesser than what the Kalimpong Haat Bazaar conducts in a couple of months. The



figures speak for themselves- in 2006 only twenty crores worth of business was conducted while in 2007 28 crores worth of trade was transacted. Now consider the above figures and decide for yourself if what is going on at Nathula is really trade or a drama. And would you believe it- Wool, Goat Cashmere, Got Skin, Sheep Skin, Yak tail, Yak hair, are some of the items on the trade list- Is this a joke or what?? In the hope of reviving the long dead HINDI-CHINI BHAI BHAI concept, the two Asian Giants and the two most dynamic economies of the world today are out to make its citizens a fool- and to any extent they have managed in their endeavours when you consider the way our Politicians and others behave over this drama. Despite the drama being enacted, which is there for everyone to see, ill-informed people or people just looking to earn a few frames on the local TV channels or a few lines in the regional papers, seem to be joining the bandwagon demanding trade at Jeleppla via Kalimpong. One can excuse the Politicians of the region for demanding trying to beat up this issue taking into consideration their knowledge levels but what of the journalists and the chambers of commerce?? These guys are not supposed to be fools... yet they seem to be behaving like one. Do they not realize and can they not see through the charade that is taking place at Nathula in the name of Indo-China bilateral trade?? My guess is that they cannot, as the various Chambers of Commerce of these days are not run by talented and knowledgeable people but mostly by petty traders wanting to make a name for themselves or trying to gain a little bit of respectability in their respective towns, which they think a position in these association will give them. Of course there are good men with sincere intentions and the requisite knowledge in these trade bodies too but they are badly outnumbered for their voices to be heard. But after almost two years of trade resuming in Nathula, there are now a considerable number of people in the Hills and elsewhere who are convinced that trading at heights of over 14500feet is fraught with loop-holes and till both the governments actually are not serious about their intentions- trading at Nathula or the proposed trade at Jeleppla, will remain the eye-wash that it is at the moment. Ok lets for a moment assume that both New Delhi and Beijing suddenly forget all other aspects of their relations and concentrate only on trade and then actually start trading in Jeleppla in the true sense of the word and not the type of stage show being performed at Nathula. Lots of businessmen will definitely stand to gain but my question is- who will these businessmen be??? Will they be businessmen from the Hills??? Will the existing business houses in Kalimpong and around actually stand to gain anything?? I am sorry to say but my assumption is that traders in the Darjeeling Hills will be mere spectators to the convoys of trucks plying between Siliguri & Jeleppla. If the resumption of trade through Jeleppla via Kalimpong is done in the proper manner then all the orders will probably routed through the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi or the Chinese Trade agents in Kolkata. The big time business houses in Kolkata and Delhi having contacts in the diplomatic circles will rake in all the big and lucrative business proposals and orders while all those who are presently crying themselves hoarse demanding the resumption of trade through Jeleppla, will be left dwindling their thumbs. Probably the only thing we will be getting in return will be all the filth, smoke, grease and smog that these trucks will leave behind, not to talk of the sound pollution and the traffic chaos. And talking of traffic, may I ask the advocates of trade through Jeleppla, which road will all these truck use while plying between Siliguri and

Kalimpong, Pedong and therefrom to Rhenock??? Can these roads, which are already splitting at its seams with the existing traffic, actually be able to take on the additional load?? And these vehicles carrying consignments to Jelepla will definitely not be Maruti Vans but rather ten wheeler or even larger trucks. Now lets look at the items that can be traded between China and India through Nathula, which probably will remain the same even if Jelepla is ever opened up for trading purpose. Out of the 45 items that can be traded presently (29 from India and 14 from China), products like Wool, Goat Cashmere, Goat Skin, Sheep Skin, Yak Tail, Yak Hair, Horses, Salt, Borax, Szaibelyita, China Clay and Silk can be imported into India. Goat Skin?? Sheep Skin?? Yak Tail?? Yak Hair?? Are we still living in the nineteenth century or what?? From the Indian side products like Blankets, Textiles, Cycles, Watches, Shoes, Stationeries etc can be exported. Chances are that even as you are reading this article you are wrapped up in a Chinese Blanket, wearing a night-suit made of Chinese fabric, wearing a Chinese watch, have a Chinese Chappal under your bed and have Chinese stationery on your table. Why would the Chinese traders want to import these products, which already are being produce in their country in more numbers than they can use?? So now decide for yourself if what is happening in Nathula presently is really trade or a drama.

Professor Mahendra P. Lama, Head of the Nathula Study Group, says that about Rs. 1700 crore in roads, insurance, customs, information technology, warehousing, banking and allied sectors would be required to be invested by 2010 in

Nathula for the proper functioning of trade there. Will the Indian Government actually invest such an enormous amount considering the fact that trade worth only 20 lakhs & 30 lakhs were conducted in the years 2006 and 2007 respectively?? I am sure it will not, taking into account the cost-return ration. It just does not make any economical sense for the government to make such a heavy investment.



Even the traders who are actually licensed to do business at Nathula, themselves are not one bit happy and have been demanding an upward revision in the number of items that can be traded so that trading at this dizzying height is financially viable. " We have put up a demand with the Commerce Ministry for an increase in the list of items to 100 from 29 at present in order to make the border trade at Nathula viable for our traders", says Anil Kumar Gupta, President of the Indo-China Traders Association of Sikkim (ICTAS). In other words he admits that under present conditions, the trade is not viable.

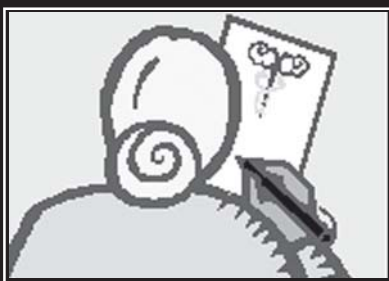
So what makes people think that if trade is opened through Jelepla, it will be viable??? My reading is that considering the fragile relationship that the two Asian giants share and with their history of distrust and deceit, trade at Nathula or Jelepla will never be viable.

Now let me come to the main point I have been wanting to make through this article. To my opinion Jelepla for the Darjeeling Hills was and will be a gold mine even if in the present context it is not. The region can rake in an vast amount of revenue, generate a large number of employment, see a substantial increase in its business earnings and as a matter of fact even earn a huge huge name for itself all around the globe if our netas, business Associations and the so called Citizen Groups (who claim to represent the peoples interests), play their cards right. They can do this by getting together and lobbying for the opening up of Jelepla Pass for the purpose of Tourism rather than harping on trade through Jelepla. If they can do this successfully it would be a God sent opportunity for these Hills of ours which otherwise never seems to show up in the Central, State or even the DGHC government radars. Well actually it does show up once in a while but only when someone like a Mahindra Singh Kohli comes along.

I have done a little bit of arithmetic on this subject myself and have calculated that even if only 25% of the tourists who visit Darjeeling & Kalimpong, plan a trip to Jelepla then our town, each tourist season, will earn more money than the total revenue that Nathula has earned in the last two years through trade.

Just give the following facts a little thought- First- the volume of tourists in the Hills will increase drastically, Second- their duration of stay in will be stretched by at least a couple of days more, Third- Tourist taxis will hit a jackpot, Fourth- Our educated unemployed youth will find new sources of employment in the tourism trade, Fifth- Places like Algarah & Pedong will prosper with the increased tourist traffic flowing through these hamlets, Sixth- tourists will book their tours directly for the region rather than via Delhi or Kolkata & seventh- We will be able to earn a world-wide name for ourselves.

The benefits for us, if tourists are allowed to visit Jelepla via Kalimpong are endless. So why do our political, social and business leaders still want trade instead of tourism?? Your guess is as good as mine....□



You may send your Articles to

**The Editor
Himalayan Times
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Kalimpong**

An Orphaned Nation

Ms. Janice Mukhia

Imagine a talent show being the litmus test to your identity. On any given day that would seem absurd? I don't get it and neither do I expect you to. But believe it not..... Indian Idol III, or more importantly so, the aftermaths of its results is what made me reflect on the gravity of a very

“grave situation”.

As a member of a hyphenated community, be it Indian-African-American, Asian-American... I inevitably fall into that unenviable grey of not knowing where exactly it is that I belong. Consequently, I inherit quite a raw deal a.k.a a “torn-sense of identity”. But then again, I guess it comes with the territory. In my case, I am an Indian of Nepali origin, now turned American after being considered an Alien for “N” number of years. Go figure!!! It's been a transition to say the least.

For the most part, I would like to call myself a Kalimpong from Dungra busty but since that turns out to be an inconvenience from a geographically insignificant stand-point, I've settled for The wider picture....A Darjeelingey. But I digress.

Coming home to my original point, results of Indian Idol III has indeed driven home a very somber issue

for me and for a thousand other Nepalese living in the area. Here was Prashant Tamang, the 23-year-old contestant who put Darjeeling on the map in more ways than one. Quite unknowingly the world. Quite involuntarily he lost the simplicity of being a mere participant on a national competition and transformed into an emblematic figure for an entire community. A community nevertheless, that has suffered suppression, deprivation and starvation for decades. In him we identified with all our unmet needs. In him we identified with our unheard demands and he became the voice for our unheard cries for justice. And so we proceeded with a passion to ensure a victory in the “ONE” battle of our lives that we knew we “HAD” to win. It was important for us to prove our skeptics wrong. It was important for us to

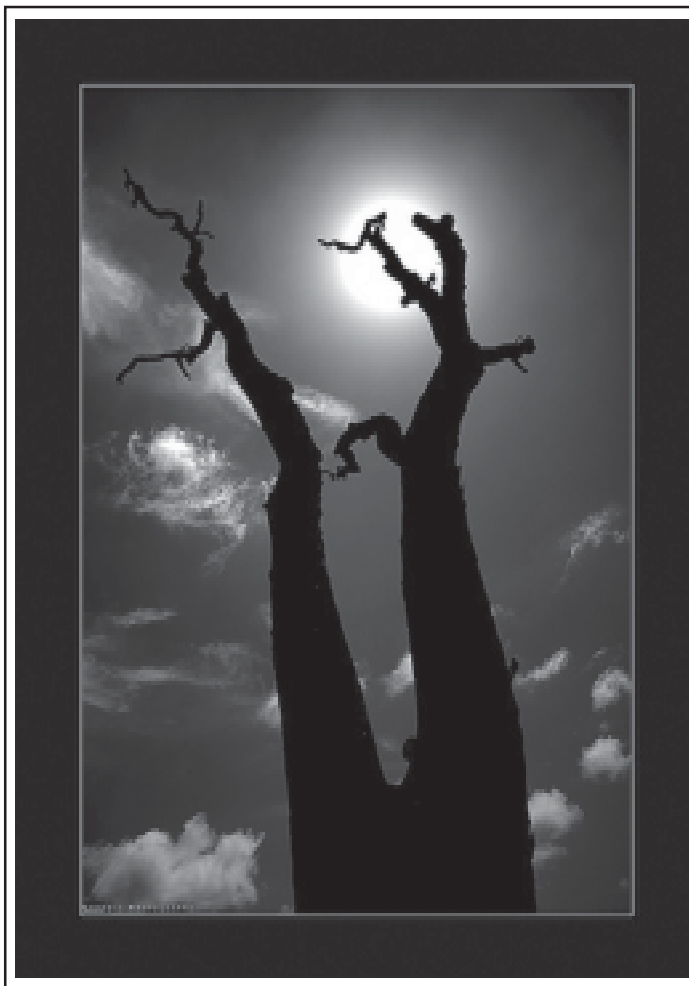
show the cynics we had awoken from our deep slumber. We did what any community would do. We rose up to the challenge and emerged as victors not the vanquished.

But as we reflect back on our victory.....it saddens me to see that today we stand alone. The country which we have called our motherland looks upon our victory with contempt. It looks to us with the same suspicion it reserves for the outsiders. It looks upon us as a competitor not a companion. As in everything else, our country and our fellow countrymen raise their fingers in condemnation for a crime we're not responsible for. Today we stand defending ourselves from false allegations. Today we stand defending the very legitimacy of our identity.

Indeed it makes me wonder.....if the very country we call “Our Motherland” rejects us in such a loathsome

manner, where then should our allegiances lie? Which flag do we turn to? Where then should we look to for support and encouragement? What then is our self-respect? Where then is “Our Home”??

Nay my brethren, we are indeed marooned in our own land. We are indeed an “Orphaned Nation”orphaned not in a foreign land, but in our own motherland which we call home. □



Opinion

In Support of Gorkhaland

Siddhartha Thapa

The Gorkhaland agitation and the demand for a separate state to Indian Nepalis is a sign of things that will further test the relation between the Congress and Indian Communists in the days ahead.

The growing instability in Northern Bengal has the potential to foment further political instability across India; while other agitating groups across India may draw inspirations from Gorkha Janamukti Morcha (GJM)'s recent success to put enormous pressure on New Delhi, to acquiesce to their demand of a separate state.

This new development in Northern Bengal is bound to pinch the policy-makers in New Delhi and Calcutta. Theoretically, the GJM leaders have the moral high ground to press for a separate state; this is mainly because each state in India has been geographically divided along cultural and linguistic lines.

Therefore, GJM's demand for a separate state is morally and politically a just cause. Gorkhalis of Northeast and West Bengal states have been largely neglected and secluded as state governments have reduced the Indian Nepalis to second class citizens. In fact, Nepalis living for generations in Northeast and North Bengal have been denied the social, political and economic rights. They have been given unofficially a minority status.

The continued neglect of Indian Nepalis has created this feeling of 'un-Indianess' in the hearts and minds of the people living in Northeast and Darjeeling. And in the recent past, New Delhi has done very little to demonstrate seriousness over the deteriorating situation in Gorkhaland, primarily because the former coalition partner continues to blackmail the Congress to retain its dictatorial autonomy in Bengal; while it continues to hypocritically maintains a stronghold over policy matters in New Delhi.

The demand for Gorkhaland, therefore, is genuine and the Indian Nepalis must be given a separate state. Besides, North Bengal does not belong to Calcutta. It was a part of Nepal until 1816. Nepal ceded the territory to British India. Since then, Nepalis have been living as Indian nationals. They cannot be treated as Nepali nationals now.

Subash Ghising no longer holds ground in Darjeeling as he has betrayed the Indian Gorkhas by compromising with the Stalin regime which continues to rule North Bengal ruthlessly. Now Ghising has been replaced by new leaders who are politically committed to the Indian Nepalis cause — that is a state within the Indian Union. These leaders epitomize a sense of hope that envisions an end to the Stalin rule in North Bengal.



Opinion

However, even if a compromise is reached with the Marxist government due to New Delhi's insistence, the possibility of a long-term solution is impossible without New Delhi agreeing for a complete statehood.

Likewise, the growing popularity for the demand of Gorkhaland may lead to a state of mental trepidation for the Marxist and to others who doubt the allegiance of the Gorkhalis. Contrary to this thought, the Gorkhalis in India may share cultural similarities with their own kind in Nepal, but it stops right there. Gorkhalis too could argue in a similar vein questioning loyalties of other ethnic groups within India, but that would neither solve their problems nor would they garner support for their cause.

There are approximately 15 million Gorkhalis living in India and they by and large, have contributed to the economic development of India. In fact, Nepalis of Indian origin have defended India rather than Indians themselves. Had the Gorkha Rifles not been there during the partition that triggered communal violence between Hindus and Muslim, more Indians and Pakistanis would have died. Has any Indian realized and mentioned the role of the Gorkha Rifles in any book or write up?

India recruits Gorkhalis for their elite Gorkha battalions and these people have fought for India giving up their lives in pride. The recent triumph of Prashant Tamang in the Indian Idol show elucidates the achievement of an Indian above everything else and what he did was equally symbolic, he sang in Hindi, the national language of India.

Some manipulative sleuths within the ranks of CPI-M may try selling propaganda that the GJM movement has been the handwork of Nepal. However, such claims are too fanciful to be true. The truth of the matter is the UPA government must end the policy of ethnic hypocrisy and provide justice to the Indian Gorkhas.

Closed door negotiations and secret political parleys have already begun with the aim of finding a solution to Gorkhaland. But this has started on the wrong-foot. In a recently concluded all-party meeting in Calcutta, the Stalin regime chose to ignore GJM. A political confrontation of great magnitude seems unavoidable between the CPI-M and the GJM. Many Gorkhalis will lose their lives, but come what may Gorkhalis should not move an inch away from their demands. If India has fought a battle in Sri Lanka to ensure rightful dignity for the Tamils, why can't it guarantee equality to Indians at home?

All party meetings must continue be convened in New Delhi and a solution must be sought at the earliest before the world begins to look at the deteriorating situation that will eventually unfold in Northern Bengal with great shock. After all, Nandigram massacre has shown the ruthless involvement of the CPI-M. Should the GJM remain adamant, the CPI-M will not hesitate to use brute force against the Gorkhalis. There is still time to resolve the issue of Gorkhaland in an amicable manner. But if the CPI-M continues to demonstrate a policy of ignorance and bullshness, things will only get worse causing great shame to India. Killing an Indian for a solution that ultimately benefits India would seem too tragic. ■



* Article reproduced from the Internet

The latest fad that the ongoing movement for Gorkhaland has thrown up is the quest to know more about the history of the region as well as of the hundred year old demand. The history bug has become so vibrant that it seems that no one in the Hills has been spared by its sting. History is now the preferred topic of discussion everywhere- whether to be on television talk shows, morning walks or in the *Chia ko Dokans*. While it is perfectly all right in wanting to know more about the history of the place one belongs to, what is not right is the fact that now everyone seems to have his or her own version of the history.

So to clear all the confusion Himalayan Times is starting this column from this issue onwards, which will give its readers, History, as it was.

We start this column by giving our readers, in brief, the history of the Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong & Siliguri sub-divisions, and how finally this area ended up in the hands of present day Bengal.

HISTORY OF THE DARJEELING AREA A JUGGLING ACT

By Sandip C. Jain

Historically the present day Sub-Divisions of Darjeeling, Kurseong, Siliguri & Kalimpong always since time immemorial, belonged to Sikkim. In 1789, Nepal annexed the present day area of Darjeeling, Kurseong & Siliguri sub-divisions. The British annexed it after the Anglo-Gorkha war and the Treaty of Segowlee on 2/12/1815 and possessed it for a brief period before reuniting it with Sikkim on 10.2.1817 as per the Treaty of Titalia. The British once again annexed it into their empire in 1861 (16.4.1861) after it forced the Maharaja of Sikkim to sign the Treaty of Tumloong. On the other hand, the area to the left bank of the River Teesta on which roughly, the area of present day Kalimpong Sub-division lies, too historically was a portion of the Sikkimese empire. The Bhutanese overran it after the death of the king Tensung Namgyel and at the onset of the rule of king Chador Namgyel (1700). It remained with the Bhutanese rulers till 1865 when after the Anglo-



Historically the present day Sub-Divisions of Darjeeling, Kurseong, Siliguri & Kalimpong always since time immemorial, belonged to Sikkim.

Bhutan war and the Treaty of Sinchula (11.11.1865) the British annexed the area along with the "Athara Duars" to the British Empire. Subsequently the British rules of India at that time clubbed these areas and formed it into the District of Darjeeling. The district actually consisted of two Sub-Divisions initially. Darjeeling Sub-divisions and Kalimpong Sub-division. Kalimpong after being annexed by the British in 1865 was actually formed as a Sub-Division by the name of Dalimkote and attached it the Western Duars District but a year later (in 1866) it was transferred to the Dist of Darjeeling. In 1891, the area of the Sadar Sub-Division (District H.Q) was reorganized and Sub-Division of Kurseong was formed. Later in the year 1907, the Sub-Division of Siliguri was formed splitting the Kurseong Sub-Division. Thus the four Sub-Divisions

were formed under the District of Darjeeling which remains till today.

Ever since the start of the district with the “discovery” of “Darjeeling” by Capt. George Alymer Lloyd and J.W Grant, the Commercial Resident at Malda, in February 1829, the ownership and administration of the area was handled like an Jugglery Act. Ever after the British decided to develop Darjeeling into a “Sanitarium” and the “Deed of Grant” received from the Rajah of Sikkim (under questionable circumstances) on the 1.2.1935, the administration of the District was like a juggling ball in several hands. First the local authority in Darjeeling was rested in the hands of Capt G.A. Lloyd who though claimed to be the sole discoverer of Darjeeling was actually a co-discover along with J.W. Grant. Lloyd after bungling an several fronts (including the much delayed Darjeeling Road, the much controversial Darjeeling Bazaar & much ill managed Darjeeling coolie problem) he lost favors with the bosses in Calcutta and he was replaced by Dr. A. Campbell. In 1850, about 640 square miles consisting of both Hilly and Terai area was annexed into the British Empire. The Terai portion was placed under the Purnea District while the hilly areas remained with the Darjeeling District. The Terai area which includes present day Siliguri was reattached to the Darjeeling District when the British realized that the people of the region were not happy at the area being split up between two districts.

Eventually the district was included in the Rajsahai Division (present day Bangladesh) but as a result of the Partition of Bengal in October 1905 the District was transferred to the Bhagalpur Division (present day Bihar). Again in March 1912, as a result of the rearrangement of the Provinces, Darjeeling district was once again attached to the Rajsahai Division.

After being reattached to the Rajsahai Division, the District of Darjeeling was made into a Non-Regulatory District. A Non-Regulatory District was one where Acts & Regulations applicable elsewhere were not applicable unless specifically extended to the District. This was probably an acknowledgement of the fact that Darjeeling District was culturally, ethnically & linguistically different from the main land of Bengal. Even after the Government of India Act of 1919 was enacted and The Bengal Legislations Council constituted, the District of Darjeeling was not required to send a representative to the Council nor was subject to the vote of the Council. The District was later declared an Excluded Area and hence its administration was directly vested in the hands of the Governor in Council who had the authority to deny or suggest modifications he thought fit for the administration of Darjeeling. Then again in the year 1935, the entire Darjeeling Area was declared

as a Partially Excuded Area, meaning it was necessary for the area to send a representative to the Bengal Legislative Council. Mr. Damber Singh Gurung of Kalimpong was elected the first representative from the District. What this did was that for all practical purposes, Darjeeling became a part of Bengal formally. The deduction being that despite being a part of the Bengal Presidency, thanks to the British search for a Hill Station in Eastern India, Darjeeling was always treated differently from mainland Bengal.

The confusion regarding the status and ownership of Darjeeling Area was so great that when India Finally gained Independence in 1947- a flag of Pakistan was hoisted by a confused soul over Ring Cinema Hall and it remained there for four full days. This probably was because of the fact that Darjeeling was a part of the Rajsahai province and Rajsahai was in East Pakistan. □



The deduction being that despite being a part of the Bengal Presidency, thanks to the British search for a Hill Station in Eastern India, Darjeeling was always treated differently from mainland Bengal

Degradation of Environment, pollution and Ecological Problem in Darjeeling Hill Areas

_____ R.P.Sharma

Our environment is really unique because it sustains life and growth. On other planets there is no environment and so no life. Environment means all that surrounds us. It is a very complex and comprehensive phenomenon. It consists of the climate, geography, geology and all the natural resources that nature has bestowed upon us. Life is there because of our peculiar biosphere and ecosystem. Life has been there on this planet because of a certain balance between these various elements. Without this balance, our planet would have been just another sterile and lifeless planet revolving round the sun.

Our life depends on healthy and balanced environmental conditions. Our health working habits, life style, behaviour etc. are closely linked with all that surrounds us. The climate is an integral part of the environment. The varied climatic conditions in our planet have been responsible for all the variety that we possess in our cultures, clothings, foods festivals, social, customs etc. The human population is scattered all over world. But there are marked socio culture difference among various races groups countries and nations because of different geographical and climatic conditions.

Environmental degradation in Darjeeling hill areas has been increasing day by day. The Darjeeling hill areas are facing



If the current development exercise is not stopped and the stage of ecological ruin is not reversed through a viable alternative area perspective-based approach of development, the situation will assume catastrophic dimensions. The planned environmental damage in the Darjeeling Hills areas sound like the death-knell. Not only for the lakhs living in the hill areas but also million living in the surroundings.

Physical and biological processes of natural environmental system operates in such a way that any change in any part of the environment at any place in a specific time period is suitably compensated

by negative feedback mechanism in a natural condition. Thus the natural environment system has inherited suit self regulating mechanism known as "HOMEOSTATIC MECHANISM" through which any change in the natural ecosystem/ environmental system is counterbalanced by responses of the system to the change and ultimately ecosystem stability or environmental equilibrium is restored.

Since the dawn of industrial revolution in the 1860s man has emerged the most powerful environmental process spear headed by modern technologies capable of modifying the environment to a great extent. Infact, of all organisms, man is the most intectual and intelligent and powerful animal and is capable of not only affecting the environment like other organism but is also able to alter the basic composition of the environment at a scale determintal not to all biota but also to his existence.

Phenomenal increases in human population in the present day century has put enormous pressure on nature resources in order to meet out the demand of ever increasing urbanisation. The development of modern Technologies and increasing economic functions of man have further accelerated the rate of exploitation of natural resources. All these have modified a few of the components of the

the worst ever crisis. The planned ecological damage in the region is gradually extending in to the flatland areas. If the current development exercise is not stopped and the stage of ecological ruin is not reversed through a viable alternative area perspective-based approach

of development, the situation will assume catastrophic dimensions. The planned environmental damage in the Darjeeling Hills areas sound like the death-knell. Not only for lakhs living in the hill areas but also million living in the surroundings.

The reason for environmental degradation have been found due to following things: -

(i) Population growth and its impact on land and environment (ii) Deforestation (iii) Desertification (iv) Tourism Development (v) Mining (vi) Developmental activities (vii) Farming (viii) Air pollution (ix) Water pollution (x) Soil pollution (xi) Sound pollution (xii) Acid rain/black rain and (xiii) Indiscriminate natural resources use and ecological implication etc. because of the above reasons the temperature of the hill have gone up at present. It may be mentioned here that on February 11-1905 the temperature of Darjeeling was (-5°C). After 100yrs the temperature of Darjeeling rose to (+6°C) on the There used to be heavy snow fall in Kalimpong in 1920 but now maximum temperature of Kalimpong has gone up as high as 33°C. The flora and fauna of Darjeeling hill area also has been effected in the same manner.



There is large scale deforestation. Forest are being converted into living space. After the Industrial Revolution, the world is full of factories. Because of this, the environment is largely polluted. The use of petrol, diesel and other types of fuel is on the increase. Smoke, dust, and poisonous gases released from vehicles and chimneys pollute the atmosphere. Proper methods are not being used to bring this pollution under control.

environment to such an extent that the adverse effects on the environment can not be set right by the "HOMEOSTATIC MECHANISM" or self regulation mechanism of the environment. Consequently, the changed environmental condition adversely affected the organism (both plants and

animals including man) in the biosphere. Thus it is obvious that environmental Degradation refers to the deterioration in its physical components brought by the biological processes mainly by human activities to such an extent that it can not be set right by self regularatory mechanism or system or homeostatic mechanism of the environment.

It may be stated that environmental pollution means lowering of environmental quality at local, regional, and global levels by both natural processes and human activities. Both environmental pollution and degradation are considered in terms of man. Since the realization of environmental pollution has now become a global concern and there is growing awareness about pollution as a vicious circle situation, a comprehensive study of pollution involving

definitions and perception of pollution, type of pollution, source of pollution, causes and processes of pollution, environmental and ecological effects of pollution, monitoring of pollution and pollution abatement programs is not only desirable for environmental geographers and environmental scientist but is also necessary so that future

strategies for resources utilization and comprehension programs may be formulated and complemented.

Some environmentalists say that “pollution means making something impure and unfit for use. Today man is polluting everything around him including the environment in which he lives. This has a long ranging effect on human life. Environment pollution is increasing every day.

In the older days the atmosphere was pure. There were not many factors that polluted the air people breathed. They were not the days of large scale industries. Not many vehicles moved on the roads. Large forests helped the cleaning of air. Pollutants like carbondioxide were produced in small quantities. Today all this has changed. Life has become complex. Man now uses a number of vehicles and instruments that pollute the atmosphere. Industrialization causes more and more pollution.

There is large scale deforestation. Forests are being converted into living spaces. After the Industrial Revolution the world is full of factories. Because of this the environment is largely polluted. The use of petrol, diesel and other types of fuel is on the increase. Smoke, dust, and poisonous gases released from vehicles and chimneys pollute the atmosphere. Proper methods are not being used to bring this pollution under control.

Another factor of degradation of environment in Darjeeling Hill Areas is developmental works undertaken by different departments. During British period there were only about 500 km of roads approximately in the three hill sub-divisions of Darjeeling. Since 1980 there



During British period there were only about 500 km of roads approximately in the three hill sub-divisions of Darjeeling. Since 1980 there has been a construction of about 250 km of road so far in these three hill sub-Divisions where approximately 10,00000 cubic meter of debris slide down in the valleys resulting in ecological damage killing of innocent animals resulting in Soil, Water and Air pollution.

have been a construction of about 250 km of road so far in three hill sub-Divisions where approximately 10,00000 cubic meter of debris slide down in the valleys resulting in ecological damage killing of innocent animals and resulting in Soil, Water and Air pollution.

In road constructions, maximum agricultural land as well as tea garden areas and trees have been damaged. Roads are a serious threat for biotic factors of Darjeeling hill areas. The rapid and unscientific haphazard development of roads in the Darjeeling hill areas is affecting endangered species of flora and fauna. Road construction in hills generate a huge amount of debris which is the basic cause of environment degradation. For construction of one Kilometer road in hills about 4000 to 8000 cubic meter of debris is excavated from the 1km of road land. The direct impact of road construction occurs in the form of forest cutting and damage of many species of small plants. The affect of the construction work can be seen in the form of landslides, boulder falls and damage and cutting of land. The landslide destroys the natural beauty and reduce the forest cover. In Darjeeling hill areas most of the interior villages area shows the excavated land for road construction and huge amount of debris slide down in the valleys resulting in ecological damage in all respect.

In addition to this many tourist lodges have been constructed in three hill sub-divisions of Darjeeling district some are situated in remote corners of the district. During construction of such tourist lodges and rest shed, a lot of deforestation has taken place which has further damaged the environment. □

BEWARE OF MOBILES

By Damayanti Datta

The debate on the potential health hazards of cell phones is simmering once again. Even though the data are mixed and experts differ, the Government has now sounded the alarm. How harmful is your mobile?

For a nation that loves to talk. Cell phones have become a lifeline. Metro Indians talk seven hours and text 56 messages a week on average, while more than 50 per cent tune in to mobile music even at work. But the figures, thrown up by a study last year by market research company IDC India, don't quite capture how much the gadget has become a part of our lives. From one in 10 urban homes owning a landline a decade back, India is now the world's fastest-growing mobile market, selling either million cell phones a month. With 250 million Indians owning a handset, you're a problem for others if you don't have one. But the power of words may just turn out to be too much of a good thing. The Union Health Ministry has raised the critical question: how safe are mobile phones?

"The question is not new". Say Dr Suresh Advani, director of medical oncology at Mumbai's Jaslok Hospital.

"Researchers all over the world have been probing if for a decade, with little resolution." He adds. But unlike in the West, India has been largely indifferent to the potential health hazards b(59) per cent city-slickers are "least bothered", says the IDC India survey). The alarm started beeping when the technical wing of the Department of Telecommunications (DOT) found levels of radiation at certain base stations in Delhi far in excess of global norms. The DOT sat up, took note that India does not implement international mobile-safety tenets and rolled out a draft guideline "The studies of possible hazards to human health from exposure to electromagnetic field suggest that there is need to control the unwanted exposure as per the World Health Organisation guidelines". And the health ministry tooted



warning that mobile radiation may be harmful, asked service-providers and makers to avoid promotional ads featuring children and pregnant women and commissioned India's first large-scale study on the health effects of the phone. What adds to the fear factor is the sudden slew of research on mobile safety. Check out the statistics using cell phones for more than 10 years can double the risk of brain cancer using those for more than 15 minutes could lead to headaches. Sleeplessness and fatigue: four times more risk of rare ear tumours after 10 years of heavy cell phones. Its likely to take 30-40 years of mobile use to show up health risks. Most of the theories doing the rounds focus three issues the thermal effect of exposure to radiation from cell phones: the genetic effect of radio waves harming body cells and damaging the DNA and the carcinogenic effects-do cell phones generate the kind of radiation that could conceivably cause cancer?

"But every day we swim in a sea of radiation produced by electrical appliances power lines wiring building, and a slew of other technologies that are part of modern life." say N.K. Joshi, physicist with the Bhaba Atomic Research Centre in Mumbai "From the microwave over in the kitchen, the lock radio next to your bed, to the cellular phone you hold to your ear. The concern over cell phones stems from a form of low frequency radiation that's produced when the gadgets communicate with their base station. While high-frequency radiation-found in ultraviolet rays. X-rays and gamma rays-is known to cause cancer at high doses., the risk of this milder form remain unclear. According to a report published in the journal of the National Cancer Institute last year for radiation to cause cancer it must break

chemical bonds in the body. Mobile radiations are millions of times less energetic to be able to do this claimed the researchers.

Health CELL PHONES

But long-term use may be another story. "Mobile technology has not been specifically evaluated from this angle, before out to use. "says cancer specialist Dr Harit Chaturvedi of Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Foundation. Delhi "These gadgets have been widely available for only about a decade." he says. "Most studies have focused on people who have been using mobile for three to five years. Tumours can take twice as long to develop." In fact, earlier this year, Dr Vini Khurana, a Mayo clinic neurosurgeon. revealed that long-term use doubles the risk of brain cancer. Similarly, a 13-country World Health Organisation "Interphone" study this year suggests a link between long-term use and three types of brain tumours-glioma, parotid and acoustic neuroma-all near the ears.

Experts make a case for cumulative radiation risk. Long-term exposure to radio waves from cell phones and towards can stress our cells by releasing DNA-damaging free radicals and stress proteins that can migrate through the blood-brain barrier and cause degenerative damage in the brain "The current research scenario is not conclusive." Says neurologist Dr. Sumit Singh of the All India Institute



Long-term exposure to radio waves from cell phones and towards can stress our cells by releasing DNA-damaging free radicals and stress proteins that can migrate through the blood-brain barrier and cause degenerative damage in the brain. A Study suggests a link between long-term cell-phone use and three types of brain tumours-glioma, parotid and acoustic neuroma-all near the ears.

of Medical Sciences (AIMS). "But one needs to keep in mind that diseases such as MS, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's are linked to protein being found in the brain. There's no harm in using mobiles in moderation."

That's not all, there's evidence to show that the radiation from mobiles activates the brain's stress system delays and reduces sleep causes headaches reports a new study published in the journal Sleep this year. Dr. Naresh Panda of Post Graduate Medical Institute of Research at Chandigarh has found long-term cell phone use, particularly on one ear may cause inner ear damage and deafness. There appear to be some warning signals: "Feeling warmth in the ear after a cell conversation, a sense of fullness. Or a ringing in the ear."

Although last month, a study in the medical journal. Fertility & Sterility claimed that cell phone can affect male fertility, there adverse effect on pregnant women and children is now more accepted in medical world. "Women who regularly use mobile phone are more likely to have children with behavioural problems." holds a study this year in the journal Epidemiology "Parents who believe they are enhancing children's safety and social standing by giving them mobiles could be impairing their health and ability to learn." Warns Singh. "With their developing nervous system and growing tissues, children run a

CAN YOUR MOBILE HARM YOU ???

Long and heavy use can, say scientists.....

CANCER

Radiation not strong enough to break chemical bonds in the body. But heavy use may enhance the risk of brain cancer.



TUMOURS

Scientists link up long-term use to brain tumours. The risk of ear tumours is believed to go up four-folds.



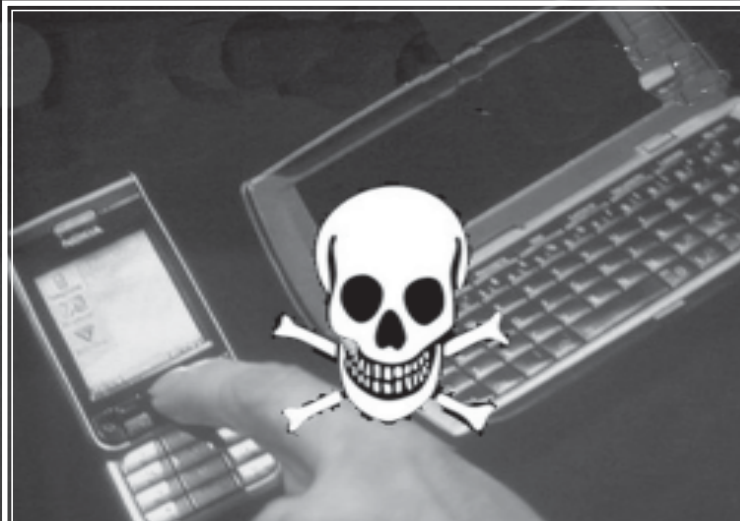
DEGENERATION

Radiation may break the protective blood brain barrier as seen in diseases like MS, Alzheimer's or Parkinson's.



greater risk energy absorption and a longer lifetime exposure." This could lead to thing like lack of concentration, memory-loss, inability to learn, hyperactivity and behavioral problems, he explains.

It the DOT has its way, all phones and base station operators in the country will compulsorily need to have certification on safety standards. "Manufacturers will also have to inform consumers about the Specific Absorption Rate (SAR)-the rate at which the body absorbs emissions from the handset-on websites, user manuals and even on screens. "says Gagandeep Singh Sapra, a tech-aficionado who runs his data centre. System 3 Net Technologies in Delhi. In the US, the level is capped at 1.6 watt per kg of issue, in Europe it's 2 w/kg. "This is at par with guidelines laid down by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection for limiting exposure to electromagnetic radiation," he says. But in India. until now there has



DOS & DONTs

- * Use landlines instead of mobiles wherever possible.
- * Try not to use a cell phone more than 1-2 minutes at a stretch.
- * Don't use mobiles if signal is weak- they shoot out more radiation.
- * Talk less, text more; invest in a hands-free kit.
- * Opt for a low SAR phone and avoid sleeping with your mobile.
- * Try to live away from a cell 5 kms away.
- * Children below eight should not be allowed to use mobile.

been no cap. "Generally branded handsets comply with global norms and indicate the SAR in their manuals. You need to beware of the unbranded variety."

Where does that leave us? The data on cell phone-safety are mixed. Experts differ and there's not enough information to determine conclusively whether cell phones are safe or not. While the Cellular Operators Association of India insists that the "weight of scientific evidence" shows mobile phone radiation is not harmful medicos recommend a precautionary approach: use landlines wherever and whenever possible; opt for a hands-free kit; don't allow children to use mobile at all; use texting for communication; buy low SAR phones; try not to use a cell phone for longer than one or two minutes; avoid living within five km from a cell phone tower Just because science can't explain the mechanism now, it doesn't mean the problem doesn't exist. Waiting for the final verdict 30 years from now, might just be too late. □

Article reproduced from the India Today magazine for the benefit of the readers.

CAN YOUR MOBILE HARM YOU ???

Long and heavy use can, say scientists.....

DEAFNESS

Long -term use, especially on one ear, may damage tissues in the inner-ear and lead to deafness.



SLEEPLESSNESS

May activate brain's stress system: make people more alert, decrease the ability to wind down and reduce sleep.



PREGNANCY

Pregnant women ,who regularly use mobiles are more likely to have children with behavioral problems.





A SONG

Dr. S. B. Wangyel

A song to commemorate the Centenary Year
Of the first demand for the separation of Darjeeling
from Bengal Administration

Chorus

You would not allow us
To sing our song
You never agreed to
Where we belong

Our ancestors wept and our fathers cried
they sought the truth but you just lied.
In the five score years the tea-leaves have died,
the cinchona plantations have lost their pride.

Cho: You would not allow us...

Some took to the sword and others to the pen:
their methods differed but they were hon'ble men.
For a hundred full years woes upon woes
Ah! For ten damn decades just trials and throes.

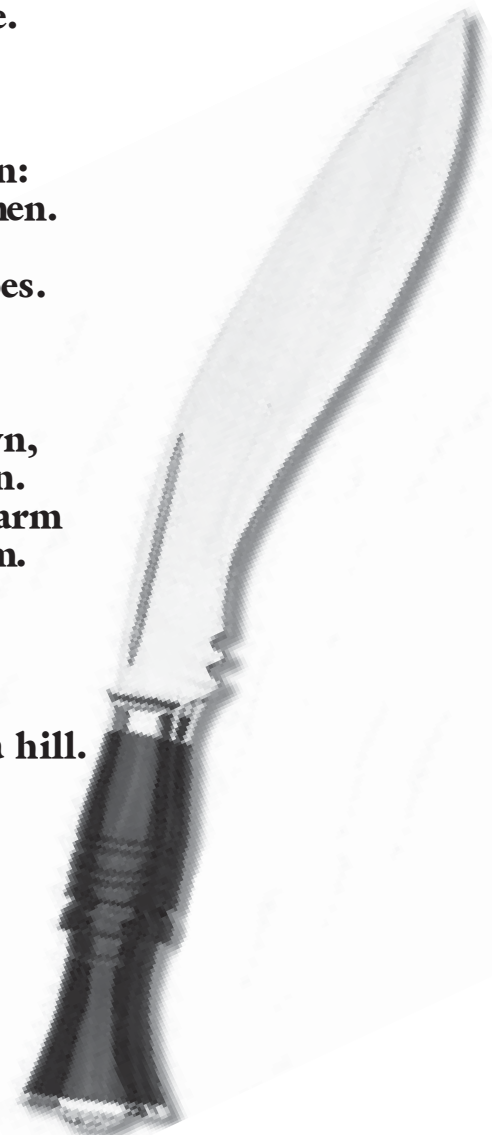
Cho: You would not allow us ...

You speak your tongue and we speak our own,
under different cultures we both have grown.
Our space will be ours and we mean you no harm
so let's together launch a new century of calm.

Cho: You would not allow us...

A century in waiting and wait we will
for there can't be a merger between a plain and a hill.
For you are you and we are we:
so give us our hills and set us free.

Cho: BUT you STILL wont allow us
to sing our song
you STILL wont agree
to where we belong.



Can you find the odd ones out??

In each set of four words, three have something in common while one does not belong in the group. But here is the kicker: Each set has two answers. In the example: Dodge is not a planet, and Earth is not a make of Car...

Example: Saturn Dodge Earth Mercury

| | | | | |
|-----|-----------|------------|----------|-----------|
| 1. | Christmas | Easter | Divali | Java |
| 2. | Chandu | Eknath | Mithali | Leander |
| 3. | Swede | Afghan | Maltese | Boxer |
| 4. | Paper | Punjabi | Plain | Mysore |
| 5. | Worm | Virus | Bug | Bacteria |
| 6. | Bacon | Lamb | Veal | Pope |
| 7. | Tennis | Squash | Hockey | Badminton |
| 8. | Ocean | Rhinoceros | Elephant | Kangaroo |
| 9. | Swiss | American | Cheddar | United |
| 10. | Blue | Red | Yellow | Green |

Answers: 1. Divali is not an Island, Java is not a Festival, 2. Leander never played cricket for India and Mithali is not a famous cricketer, 3. Swede is not a breed of Dog and Boxer is not a type of Dosa and Mysore does not start with a P, 5. Bacteria does not affect computer software and Worm does not describe germs, 6. Veal is not a famous animal and there is no Indian Kangaroo, 9. Cheddar is not an Airline Company and United is not a Cheese, English writer and Pope is not a meat, 7. Hockey does not use a racket and Badminton does not use a Ball, 8. Ocean is not an animal and there is no Indian Kangaroo, 9. Cheddar is not an Airline Company and United is not a Cheese, 10. Green is not a primary colour and Blue is not a traffic signal.

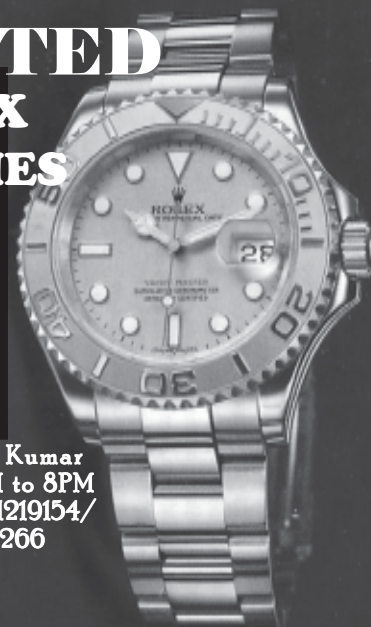
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SABITRI DEVI

THE LONE WOMEN FREEDOM FIGHTER OF DARJEELING

Dr. D. C. Roy.

Womens' contribution in Indian freedom struggle is well recognised and tested over time. But history tells more about 'His — Story' and much less about 'Her — Story'. Even then some of the historically recognised prominent women freedom fighters are:

Sarijini Naidu, Matangini Hazra, Pritilata Wadedar, and the others. Beside these few forefront leaders, a good number of fighters stayed at the back of the screen and whose contribution has neither been recorded in the national history nor they are well recognised at the regional level. But their dedication, sacrifice, devotion, loyalty, patriotism are unquestionable and their fruits are being enjoyed by the present generations without shameless mention and recognition about their contribution. One and perhaps the only such women freedom fighter from Darjeeling hills was Helen Lepcha who is popularly known as Sabitri Devi. She was a radicalist leader who wanted to revolutionize against the British rule. The present article aims at recording and reproducing some of her activities to the present generation and keep it ready for future references.

Helen Lepcha (1902/03 — 1980) is popularly known as Sabitri Devi not only in the hills but throughout the country as her rename was done none other than Mahatma Gandhi. Mrs Indira Gandhi called her Sailididi (in Nepali saili is the third daughter of a person).

Sabitri Devi was born in Kurseong in the year 1902 or 1903. Her father Achung Lepcha originally hailed from Namchi, Sikkim. Sabitri Devi was the third (saili) among the seven daughters of Achung Lepcha. She had her school education from Scots Mission School, Kurseong and was not interested for higher education and left school in 1916. Her permanent residence was at Galvin Street, Kurseong, Darjeeling.

Sabitri Devi was the first and the only Lepcha lady from Darjeeling hills who took active part in Indian freedom fighting. Inspired by Gandhiji's non violence movement, Sabitri Devi left for Calcutta in 1918 and stayed with her elder sister and joined one centre to learn the art of making thread with 'charka' (spinning wheel). She become so

efficient and expert within very short period of time that the Bengal Board of Charka made her leader to take part in one Khadi and Charka Exhibition organized at Muzaffarpur, Behar. Her expertise in the exhibition made her popular not only in Bihar but she became familiar to the leaders of the all India congress party. Later on in 1920 her dedicated service for the flood affected areas of Bihar made her an all India leader. As a result Mahatma Gandhi invited her to visit Sabarmati

Ashram where Helen Lepcha was renamed as Sabitri Devi by Bapuji. Most probably Gandhiji smelt some foreign touch in the name of Helen and made her swadeshi by pure Indian name. Following Gandhiji's instruction, her areas of activity extended over different coal field areas of Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh but she was confined to Patna, Danapur, Bankipur and Jharia. The common people in these areas accepted her leadership and joined Indian freedom fighting. She attended All India Congress Conference held at Ahmedabad and met top leaders of congress including Sarojini Naidu. Later she led a procession from coal field area of Jharia to the gathering at Mahammad Ali Park, Calcutta and there met Mahatma Gandhi, Chittaranjan Das, Moulana Abul Kalam Azad, Smt Urmila Devi, Smt Swarup Rani and others. Due to all these activities she was disliked

by the British ruler and was kept under observation and restraint by the police. But this could not control her from taking part in different non violent activities, processions and boycott of foreign goods. During one boycott of foreign good and setting them fire at Siliguri, Sabitri Devi and with twelve others were arrested and accused for three months laborious imprisonment in Darjeeling jail. The Amrita Bazar Patrika in its issue on 30th January 1922 wrote "Sabitri Devi with the Congress Secretary and E. Ahmed and Gorkha volunteers have been arrested". After release from jail she was home interned and was not allowed to leave Kurseong. Even then she was not stepped back from her involvement in direct freedom struggle. She remained one of the undisputed leader of



congress party and freedom fighter of the hill district of Darjeeling.

To meet ailing C.R.Das, Mahatma Gandhi came to Darjeeling sometime during 1925-26. It is told that when Sabitri Devi met Gandhiji she was dressed herself with gold ornaments. Gandhiji was annoyed with Sabitri Devi and told her to live simple life and urged to donate all her ornaments for the Swaraj Fund. Sabitri Devi instantly donated all her ornaments for the Swaraj Fund. Since then she never used any sort of golden or silver ornaments in her life time. She was a dedicated freedom fighter and true follower of Mahatma Gandhi. She led a simple life and never used and sort of luxury articles in her life even after independence. She was a congressman by the true sense of the term. The Darjeeling district is proud of having such a dedicated lady freedom fighter and patriot of the nation.

Netaji Subash Chandra Bose spent sometimes at Gidde hills, Kurseong where Sarat Chandra Bose, elder brother of Netaji had a residence. Sisir Kumar Bose, nephew who accompanied Netaji during his escape, mentioned in his book *Mahaniskraman* about Netaji's stay at Kurseong. He mentioned that after his gall bladder operation, Netaji came to Kurseong for rest in June 1936 and left for Calcutta before winter started. For the second and last time, Netaji along with Sarat Chandra Bose, elder brother, Sisir Kumar Bose, nephew and others visited Kurseong during puja vacation (October-November of 1937) and left for Calcutta to attend General Conference of Congress where Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and others attended. He was house arrested by the

British police and Sabitri Devi was assigned the work of supplying bread etc for Netaji. It is said that Sabitri Devi played an important role in supplying secret letters, information and even dresses for Netaji during his house arrest. M.P.Rai in his book 'Bir Jatiko Amar Kahani' has mentioned that Sabitri Devi helped Netaji to escape from his house arrest at Kurseong to reach Europe through Kabul. In 1976, the Directory of Indian Women Today writes:

Savitri Devi; First Nepali Freedom Fighter. b.1903. Her original name was Helen, Gandhiji renamed her 'Savitri Devi' when she went to Sabarmati Ashram on his invitation. Her area of activity was Jharia Coal Fields, Bankipur, Danapur, Patna, etc. Used to lead large processions protesting against the British regime. Lived in Anand Bhavan

also for some time. Was the first woman to be elected Municipal Commissioner of Kharsang Municipality. Helped Netaji Subash Chandra Bose escape from imprisonment in Kharsang and migrate to Germany through Kabul. Even at this advanced age, she is an active social and political worker. Was awarded TAMRA PATRA in 1972. (Source: M.P.Rai -Bir Jatiko Amar Kahani . Aajako Sikkim Prakashan. Gangtok. 1992. page-226)

The present write up is not a critical historical study but the period of Netaji's stay at Kurseong and his migration to Kabul does not tally. But obviously it is not 1939-40 as mentioned by both M.P.Rai and Jiwan Labor as the period of Netaji's stay at Kurseong. There are enough reasons to believe that he stayed at Kurseong during 1936-37 as mentioned by Sisir Chandra Bose. It also seems unlikely that the whole plan of Netaji's escape from India to Kabul was prepared at Kurseong. Netaji was arrested and kept at Presidency jail during July-December, 1940 and left from India for Kabul on 17th January 1941. Hence his stay at Kurseong (1936-37) and decision of migration (in 1941) does not tally. The story of stitching *kurta payjama* at Kurseong (M.P.Rai -Bir Jatiko Amar Kahani, page

226) and purchase of the same from the shop of Washem Molla Dharmatala, Calcutta by Miah Akbar Shah who helped Netaji on the other side of the boarder (Bose, S.K.— *Mahaniskraman*, page 20.21), does not match each other. However, we like to refer the matter to the historians by recognizing the fact that Sabitri Devi played an important role during the period when Netaji stayed at Kurseong.

Sabitri Devi had close link with the top leaders of Bengal freedom fighters in particular and the all India leaders in general. She was not only close with

Netaji Subash Chandra Bose but was known to Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, Mahammad Ali, Sarat Chandra Bose and others. Even after independence she maintained personal relation with the Nehru family and stayed at Anand Bhawan at Alahabad which was the centre of policy making for the Congress party. Some of the top leaders of the country like Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Morarji Bhai Desai, Lala Jagat Narayan, Sashidas, and Sir Ambika Prasad knew Sabitri Devi by her name. She was very favorite to Indira Gandhi from her childhood and used to call her as Sailididi. In one occasion on her way to Darjeeling, Indira Gandhi send her personal messenger by stopping her car at Kurseong and took Sabitri Devi on her vehicle to Darjeeling. This showed her strong personality and close link with the top leaders of the country.



Beside her involvement in freedom struggle, Sabitri Devi was a social worker and worked for the common people. She was elected as Commissioner of Kurseong Municipality in 1936 and worked for the betterment of the municipal area. She was reelected as the commissioner for the second term also. She was the leader not only for the Lepchas but she was above all communal feelings and worked for all communities of the hill people. She was unanimously and simultaneously worked as the president of the Lepcha Association, Sherpa association, Anjuman Islamia of Kurseong and District Congress party. Till her death she worked as the Mandal of Kurseong region. Involvement and holding highest position in different organizations show strong personality, acceptable leadership and secular character of her life. She was well accepted and respected by all sections of the people of Kurseong. It was so much so that different religious groups in Kurseong demanded her dead body for performing the last rites according to their respective religious norms and customs. She was so close to each religion that all considered her to be the believer of their religion. This shows that Sabitri Devi never neglect or ignore any religion. She was secular by heart and may be considered as a role model for the others. She was a leader by herself.

During silver jubilee celebration of Indian independence, the Government of



India honoured and awarded Sabitri devi with Tanra Patra and conferred pension meant for the freedom fighters. Mrs Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister honoured and handed over the same to her beloved Sailididi on 15th August 1972. The Tribal Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal honoured and recognized her with the 'Reward to Tribal Headman of the district'. The Governor of West Bengal handed over the reward on 1st June 1958 at Shurbery ground, Raj Bhawan, Darjeeling.

Sabitri Devi died on 18th August 1980 at Planters Hospital, Darjeeling. Her body was brought to Kurseong where in the next day all flocks of life irrespective of their caste, creed and religion gathered to show their last respect to the departed soul. To satisfy all religious groups, the procession had to move through all the major temples, churches, gumbas and mosques located in Kurseong. The hill lost its lone woman freedom fighter but Sabitri Devi will be remembered in the minds of the people for ever.

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THEIR WORDS OUR VOCABULARY

By Dr.S.B. Wangyel

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Review

"Dr. Sonam B. Wangyal is eastern Himalayan region's one of the most prolific writers in the English language. He has been a regular contributor to major journals like 'Himal, The Himalayan Magazine' (Kathmandu), 'The Statesman' (Nbplus Siliguri edition), 'Himalayan Times' (Kalimpong) and numerous other journals, souvenirs, directories and related materials. Besides his recent successful book on Sikkim and Darjeeling this collection of some of his essays is a wonderful reading that generates humour, sadness, surprise and occasionally ever manages to startle the reader. I thoroughly enjoyed it from the page to the last."

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Many words that describe different profession come to us from distant lands and despite having Nepali alternatives for most of them we depend on the foreign substitutes. Can you ever, in the normal course of a conversation, think of substituting 'sir' for a schoolteacher with 'adhyapak', 'updeshak', 'talimayjyu', 'guruji', 'panditji', 'gyandate', 'dikshak', 'pathak' etc. it is not just difficult but nigh impossible. Just the other day I was reading a book by Professor Ramlal Adhikari, Head of the Nepali Department, Government Collage, Darjeeling, and in one six and a third page essay, Asankhya Santanka Fatherka Deshbatta, he had used over fifty English words. English is that pervasive and excluding some exceptional cases there is little point in trying to examine English words in the Nepali language. Consequently, we will not dissect English words or terms like doctor, professor, pilot, engineer, nurse, hero, receptionist, manager, superintendent, liftman, contractor, compounder, night guard, bearer and the likes for they are all dal-bhat to us and we will scour words that are spicier, more zesty and from outside the colonial influence. And in this case it is people with the less envied professions that give us the scope and the satisfaction with some terms worthy of investigation. What comes to my mind immediately is the word 'durwan'. It is jokingly said that India and Britain took so many of the able-bodied Nepalis, to fight and defend their lands, that they were able to from eleven Gorkha Regiments and in anger Nepali felt that they might as well take the rest. So the 12th Gorkha Regiment, the 'durwans' defend the properties of the affluent in the Indian cities. The word is Persian pronounced variously as 'darwan' or 'darbar' meaning a doorkeeper. What amazes me is that we have our options in the form of 'dhokay', 'dwaray', 'dwarpal' and 'dwar-rakchak' and yet.....another Persian word in our language is 'mehtar', the sweeper and scavenger, which is an offshoot of 'mihtar'. The Persian occasionally resorted to infuse a bit of irony in their words denoting humbler professions and so 'mihtar' also means a great dignitary or a pince. Similarly, the domestic tailor was called 'califa' or a vice-regent. The roots to the terms 'nokar' and 'chakar' for servants are also Persian. We normally call a single servant 'nokar' and a group of servants 'nokar-chakar' and considering the Persian meaning we are almost correct. Almost? Yes, because there is a subtle difference in that the Persians call a superior servant e.g. the accountant, the valet, the private titor, the personal attendant etc. a 'nokar' and the menial workers like the dishwasher, stable groom, the sweeper etc. a 'chakar' and when suggesting the whole group the term 'nokar-chakar' was used. While referring to a goldsmith we are fond of the word 'sunar' but another term, 'sarafee' is also used to denote this profrssion, although Parasmani's dictionary makes the latter to be, more specifically, a dealer of gold and silver in the sense of a banker and not necessarily a goldsmith. The parent word in this case is the Arabic 'ashrafee' meaning noble and the word was used to mean a gold coin in contrast to the less noble silver or bronze coins. The Arabs have also given us the word 'saees' adapted from the English syce which was originally 'sais' meanings a groom for horses or a stableman. While 'saees' retained its original Arabic meaning, 'Khalasi', the Arab tent pitcher, became an assiatant to a taxi/truck driver. The word 'raj-mistri' is a curious one for there is nothing royal (raj) about his job. The wod 'mistri' is a deviation of the Portuguese 'mastre' implying a foreman or a master-craftman and to this was added the Persian 'raz' denoting a mason o a brick-layer. Finally, let us scan that despised but ever so useful 'coolie'. The exact etymology is uncertain but there are pointers that it originally referred to a tribe, Koli, that lived in western India and were hired to do non-skilled works like carrying mud, bricks, wood etc. later the name became a term to designate a profession. What makes it difficult to come to definite conclusion is the fact that in Tamil they have a word 'kuli' suggesting hire or wages. Furthermore in the Turkish we also have 'kol' denoting a slave and surprisingly the Tibetan pejorative prefix 'khol-' also signifies a slave (kholdan, a slave; kholpo a male slave; kholmo a female slave).



Before the Road to Darjeeling was completed, travellers to Darjeeling used to be transported in “Dandies” like the above. A group of at least eight coolies used to carry the passanger.

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